IN THE CLAIMS:

Applicant, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.121, submits the following amendments to the claims:

No claims have been amended by this Response.

1. (Previously presented) An apparatus for sampling microbial organisms present on surfaces, comprising:

a reservoir suitable for providing microbial collection fluid;

a sterilizable sample collection chamber;

a sterilizable, reversibly detachable integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member having a collection fluid delivery channel and a collection fluid recovery channel, and suitable to deliver collection fluid to a target surface, and contemporaneously recover the delivered fluid from the surface;

delivery means, in communication with both the reservoir and the fluid delivery channel of the integrated member, and operable to aseptically deliver collection fluid from the reservoir to the integrated member;

vacuum means, in communication with both the sample collection chamber and the collection fluid recovery channel of the integrated member, and operable to direct collection fluid, delivered and recovered by the integrated member, to the sample collection chamber; and

sanitizing means for sanitizing the integrated member, said means comprising a heatable sanitizing fluid reservoir for receiving the integrated member and a sanitizer pump, and configured to provide for circulating sanitizing fluid in a closed loop between and through the heated sanitizing fluid reservoir and the collection fluid delivery channel and/or the collection fluid recovery channel of the integrated member to provide for sanitizing of the integrated

member.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the integrated fluid delivery and recovery member is reversibly detachable.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reservoir is a pressurizable chamber.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the reservoir is a pressurizable chamber, and wherein the delivery means comprises a compressor in communication with the chamber.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the delivery means comprises a fluid pump.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the vacuum means comprises a vacuum pump, and a moisture trap interposed between the sample collection chamber and the vacuum pump.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member, comprises a spray nozzle suitable to direct sample collection fluid toward the target surface.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member comprises a actuatable valve for actuated delivery of the sample collection fluid.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member conforms to the target surface contour.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the shape or size of the integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member is calibrated to facilitate sample collection from a predetermined target surface area.

13. (Previously presented) A method for rapid, high-throughput sampling of microbial organisms present on surfaces, comprising:

delivering sample collection fluid to a target surface, and contemporaneously recovering the delivered fluid from the target surface by means of a sterilizable, reversibly detachable integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member having a collection fluid delivery channel and a collection fluid recovery channel; and

collecting the recovered sample collection fluid into a sample collection chamber in communication with the integrated member; and

sanitizing the integrated member by circulating a sanitizing fluid in a closed loop between and through a heated sanitizing fluid reservoir and the collection fluid delivery channel and/or the collection fluid recovery channel of the integrated member to provide for sanitizing of the integrated member between sampling cycles, wherein sample collection is afforded.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the target surface is a food surface or a food-contact surface.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the food surface is that of an animal or animal carcass.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the animal carcass is bovine, porcine, equine or avian.

17. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the microbial collection fluid preserves microbial vitality without promoting microbial growth, allowing for determination of

microbial number per unit surface area.

18. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the microbial collection fluid promotes microbial growth, allowing for determination of a presence of absence of surface microbial organisms.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the sterilizable sample collection chamber further comprises a diffuser tube to provide an impinger.

20. (Previously presented) A method for rapid, high-throughput atmospheric sampling of microbial organisms, comprising:

collecting an atmospheric sample by means of a sterilizable, reversibly detachable integrated collection fluid delivery and collection fluid recovery member having a collection fluid delivery channel and a collection fluid recovery channel, the integrated member in communication with vacuum means; and

directing the collected atmospheric sample into an impinger comprised of a sample collection chamber having a diffuser tube; and

sanitizing the integrated member by circulating a sanitizing fluid in a closed loop between and through a heated sanitizing fluid reservoir and the collection fluid delivery channel and/or the collection fluid recovery channel of the integrated member to provide for sanitizing of the integrated member between sampling cycles, wherein atmospheric sampling of microbial organisms is afforded.